



OPASTCO

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Suite 700
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December 16, 2004

Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
Office of the Secretary
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Ex Parte Notice

RE: In the Matter of

**Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service
CC Docket No. 96-45**

Dear Ms. Dortch,

On December 16, 2004, representatives of the Organization for the Promotion and Advancement of Small Telecommunications Companies (OPASTCO), the Rural Independent Competitive Alliance (RICA) and the Rural Telecommunications Group (RTG) (collectively, the Rural Telecommunications Associations or RTA) met with staff from the Wireline Competition Bureau (WCB). Representing the RTA was Ron Strecker of Panhandle Telephone Cooperative in Oklahoma, Rick Vergin of Chibardun Telephone Cooperative in Wisconsin, Stuart Polikoff and Jeffrey Smith of OPASTCO, David Cosson, general counsel for RICA, and Kenneth Johnson of Bennet & Bennet, PLLC. Attending from the WCB was Narda Jones, Gina Spade, Tom Buckley, Gary Seigel, Erica Myers, James Bachtell, and Mark Seifert.

The RTA advocated the adoption of its interim universal service plan for competitive eligible telecommunications carriers (CETCs) in rural areas. The plan would provide wireless CETCs in rural areas with a “safe harbor” percentage of the rural ILEC’s per-line support. The plan also includes standardized minimum criteria for regulators to use when evaluating ETC applications in rural service areas. The plan was originally filed in the RTA’s August 6, 2004 comments in the proceeding that is considering the Universal Service Joint Board’s February 27, 2004 Recommended Decision.

We provided the WCB with a PowerPoint presentation on the interim plan as well as a copy of the plan itself. In accordance with FCC rules, this notice and the two documents handed out at the meeting are being filed electronically in the above-captioned docket.

Sincerely,

Stuart Polikoff
Director of Government Relations
OPASTCO